

FRENCH INDO-CHINA

whose penetration of truth is the deepest. A lie is only a crime when it is a blunder.

Such tactics are at best only negative. Something more positive is required in dealing with a Western people. This realization did not come to the Annamites very early, nor all at once, but it has been the most original and constructive result of the French conquest. It took a long time for the Annamites to get over the humiliation of being vanquished, but the example of China and Japan helped to blaze the trail. Injured national pride was not the only incentive for learning from the Westerner the means of fighting him. A whole new world was being opened to this isolated people. The intelligentsia were the first to perceive the foolishness of keeping their heads buried in the sand. But even the masses are slowly realizing that here, is an enormously important new element in their lives towards which they must formulate an attitude. This reaction was a process of varying degrees of slowness, and inevitably it produced a rift in the hitherto harmonious Annamite society.

The first phase of this reaction was destructive self-doubt. As time went on and the impious foreigners were not ousted by Heaven's wrath, certain natives began to wonder if something had not been rotten in the state of Annam. Possibly fatuous pride had covered serious internal weakness. Hard reality had shown the local genii impotent to combat the Western gods. Perhaps exaggerated respect for Chinese civilization had been another cause of their failure, and in the subsequent release of the Annamite soul from servility to the Chinese, the French have permitted the rebirth of a national culture. The change at first presented itself as a simple and practical

exchange of old gods
for new, for the ramifications of this transformation,
which broke
Aimamlte spiritual solidarity, were not immediately
apparent. From the
French viewpoint the discord thus engendered
automatically made then-
task of dividing and ruling far easier.

French action was from the start both conscious and
unconscious*
Assimilationist policy further hastened the dissolution of
Annamite
traditions, begun by native self-doubt. Everything in a
fixed and immovable
society was tempered with—justice, education,
family, and communal authority. If, in this, a definite policy had been
sustained, the
Annamites would have more easily adapted themselves,
but France's
mixed motives and confused political situation made for
anything but
stability. The colonial pendulum swung back and forth
between con-
trary 'sets of theories, and even the officials who
applied them. This